



Connecticut Students for a DREAM

Empower. Educate. Advocate.

Dear Appropriations Committee Legislators:

My name is Camila Bortolieto and I am a leader and founder of CT Students for a DREAM, a statewide organization of youth and allies whose goal is to advocate for the rights of undocumented immigrant students and their families. We seek to empower youth through organizing, advocacy, and leadership development. Our goal is to organize youth to be a voice of change in their communities.

I am speaking on behalf of my organization and against the provision of Governor Malloy's proposed budget that calls for consolidating the state's five legislative commissions – including LPRAC – into a single agency, i.e. Commission on Citizen Advocacy. As an organization we strongly believe that these proposals are ill advised and represent a step back for Connecticut.

LPRAC especially has been a great supporter of our organization, our cause, and our constituents. They have time and again been leaders in advocating for changes that would benefit the Latino and immigrant community in Connecticut. The existence of the individual and separate commissions allows their respective communities to come to them with issues of importance to them, something that would not be able to happen if all the commissions are combined into a single commission.

LPRAC and its members were central to making the "In-State Tuition Bill" for undocumented students a reality in CT in 2011, something that has greatly benefited CT and its diverse student body to achieve higher education.

More recently, our organization came to LPRAC seeking support for a proposal that would build on in-state tuition for our undocumented students and actually expand access to financial institutional aid to undocumented students. LPRAC has since been instrumental in helping us to advocate for our proposal at the Legislature and allies. LPRAC has helped to make CT a better state for DREAMers and all Latino students.

We understand that the state is under a budget deficit, however, for every dollar invested in LPRAC and the other commissions, they return almost two dollars back to the state in federal, philanthropic, and private contributions. LPRAC contributed back to the CT community by releasing socio-economic research studies, providing privately-funded and fundraised scholarships to CT students, supported efforts to increase voter registration and participation, and conducted legislative forums for policy-makers on such issues as education, discrimination, and public health.

Our organization, CT Students for a DREAM, and the DREAMers and students that are a part of our growing community call on the Appropriations Committee to keep the Commissions separate so that they can better serve their underserved communities and CT as a whole.

Sincerely,
Camila Bortolieto
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CT Students for a DREAM
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